

FORT MCDOWELL

(FORT MCDOWELL, EAST GARRISON)

Angel Island
Marin County
California

HABS No. CA-2721

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

1849 C St. NW

Washington, DC 20240

ADDENDUM TO:
FORT MCDOWELL
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Angel Island State Park
Angel Island
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HABS CA-2721
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PHOTOGRAPHS

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

FORT MCDOWELL (Fort McDowell, East Garrison)

HABS No. CA-2721

Location: Angel Island, Marin County, California

Dates of Construction: 1899 - May 1901: Detention Camp
November 1901 - 1946: Discharge Camp/Depot of Recruits and Casuals/Overseas Discharge and Replacement Depot

Wood buildings, many intended to be temporary, were constructed prior to 1910. A major building campaign of Mission Revival concrete buildings began in 1910, with the main features of the East Garrison in place by 1914. During the late 1910s and 1920s, some additional wood buildings of modest size were added.

Builder: U. S. Army

Original Owner: U. S. Army, 1863-48

Subsequent Owners: U. S. Department of the Interior, 1948-1963

Present Owner: State of California, Department of Parks and Recreation, 1963-present

Present Use: Angel Island State Park - buildings either vacant or used for park activities or personnel housing

Significance: The growth of the U.S. military in the early twentieth century precipitated expansion of the Army presence on Angel Island. After nearly forty years of maintaining a modest Army installation at Camp Reynolds on the west side of the island, development and resources were shifted to a new location on the east. Initially a quarry and outpost of Fort McDowell, this site was used for a variety of administrative purposes relating to the enlistment, assignment, movement, and discharge of troops until the base was decommissioned in 1946. As it still exists, the East Garrison features a remarkable collection of Army architecture from the early twentieth century. A major building campaign of reinforced concrete Mission Revival structures begun in 1910 gave this important recruit depot a cohesive aesthetic that reflected the new importance of planning in Army construction. Additional wood structures dating to both before and after this campaign illustrate the variety of architecture and functions at an Army post.

Historian: Lisa Pfueller Davidson, 2002

Project Information: Documentation of Fort McDowell was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) Division of the National Park Service, E. Blaine Cliver, Chief. The project was sponsored by the State of California Department of Parks and Recreation, Rusty Areias, Director; and by Angel Island State Park, Nick Franco, Superintendent. Project planning was coordinated by Paul Dolinsky, Chief, HABS. The field recording was conducted and the measured drawings were produced during 2001 by project supervisor Mark Schara, HABS Architect; by HABS Architect Naomi Hernandez; and by architects Christine M. Odom (University of Texas) and Gregory J. Sokaris (State University of New York at Buffalo). Historical reports were produced during 2002 by Lisa Pfueller Davidson, HABS Historian. Large format photographs were produced during 2002-03 by James Rosenthal, HABS Photographer. Assistance in all phases of this project was provided by the staff of Angel Island State Park. Additional documentation of selected East Garrison buildings is filed under HABS No. CA-2721-A through CA-2721-H. See related documentation, HABS No. CA-1841, Camp Reynolds, for information about the West Garrison portion of the island.

I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

After the great Civil War, the mammoth armies of the Union dissolved, and the Regular Army reverted to little more than an Indian constabulary. The principal military reserve, the organized militia, was also neglected. Neither foreign nor domestic policy posed much need for anything else. After the lesser Spanish War, the Regular Army retained its augmented war strength and the National Guard received attention and improvement. The new role of the United States in international politics demanded a larger and better Army with a more ready reserve, and American government was adaptive enough to respond to the need.¹

The modern role of the United States Army in the twentieth century also changed the military installations on Angel Island in San Francisco Bay. In 1900 Camp Reynolds was renamed Fort McDowell, but this name would become more closely associated with another site on the island. During the first half of the twentieth century a former outpost and quarry at the east side of the island would become the center of military activity and expansion on the island. The older buildings and constricted space available at the Camp Reynolds, later renamed the West Garrison of Fort McDowell, caused the gradual decline of this site in favor of the ambitious plans for the East Garrison.

Although Camp Reynolds had been the focus of Army activity and residence on Angel Island up until the turn of the twentieth century, other parts of the island were used for a variety of purposes including gun batteries and secondary camps. After Camp Reynolds, the next major site developed on Angel Island was the Quarantine Station at Hospital Cove. Authorized by the United States Public Health Service in 1888, construction began in this natural cove facing Tiburon to the northwest in 1890. The infrastructure of Angel Island was also developed beyond the two major nineteenth century settlement areas of Camp Reynolds and the Quarantine Station. A carriage road ran along the hilltops around the entire island, joining Camp Reynolds with the other outposts. Captain John Finley praised this road in 1902:

A military road has been completed entirely around the island at an elevation of from eighty to three hundred feet above sea level, connecting with the various camps and stations, and thence to the boat landings. This road is kept in repair by the labor of soldiers and military prisoners, and with the use of material taken from the stone quarry at Quarry point. There are many beautiful vistas from this road which winds in and out through the ravines and over the projecting ridges, with rapidly alternating scenery of luxuriant vegetation, densely wooded slopes, stretches of water, quiet coves, rugged cliffs and sheltered nooks. There is no more attractive drive in the west, outside the great national parks, than that to be

¹Russell F. Weigley. History of the United States Army (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 313.

found on the five-mile circuit of Angel Island.²

The Army Corps of Engineers operated the granite and sandstone quarry located on the eastern side of the island. It was here that much of the building material for the fortifications around the bay, buildings on Alcatraz Island and the East Garrison of Angel Island was obtained.

Detention Camp

In 1899 during the Spanish-American War the Army expanded its Angel Island operations by establishing a Detention Camp near the active quarry. The Detention Camp could isolate and care for troops returning from the Philippines with contagious diseases, particularly smallpox. Major-General William R. Shafter, then commanding the Department of California and former commanding officer at Camp Reynolds from 1886-96, chose the location for the Detention Camp on Angel Island in June 1899. Like Camp Reynolds, the site of the Detention Camp at Quarry Point was sloped and rocky. The only perfectly level ground at the ten acre camp was created by grading. The site was bounded by the military road along the ridge to the west and the bay on the north, south, and east.³

Provision was made for two full regiments of infantry or cavalry with headquarters and band. Tents and temporary wood buildings were erected and the camp ready for occupation on September 16, 1899. Tents with floors served as quarters for both men and officers. The two lines of tents for each company faced each other along a shared "street." One-story, balloon frame temporary buildings were constructed for kitchens and messrooms. These structures were arranged in lines along the eastern edge of the site. The hospital consisted of a small frame building and two tents at a ridge on the south side of the site overlooking the bay. The Thirty-First Volunteer Infantry was the first body of troops stationed at the Detention Camp. The Detention Camp remained active only briefly, with the last unit departing on May 17, 1901 leaving just a watchman in charge of the site.⁴

Discharge Camp

A few months after the Detention Camp closed, Colonel Frank M. Coxe, Chief Paymaster, Department of California, suggested using the site as a discharge camp to remove returning troops from the temptations and vice readily available adjacent to the Presidio in San Francisco. Major General S. B. M. Young was charged with establishing the Discharge Camp.

²Captain John P. Finley. "Discharging a Philippine Army, Part One" *Sunset Magazine* 9:5 (September 1902): 301.

³Captain John P. Finley. "Discharging a Philippine Army, Part Two" *Sunset Magazine* 9:6 (October 1902): 375-76.

⁴*Ibid.*, 376.

In a series of articles published during late 1902 in *Sunset Magazine*, Captain John Finley of the Ninth Infantry provided a detailed description of the activities of the Discharge Camp. From late November 1901 to July 1, 1902, 10,747 returning soldiers were processed at the Fort McDowell Discharge Camp and paid a total of \$3,356,354.⁵ Lieutenant-Colonel P. I. Chamberlain, Inspector-General, Department of California, praised the results of moving the discharge procedures to Angel Island:

It appears that approximately ninety per cent of all men paid at the camp have secured their transportation before leaving the island. It is estimated by the railroad people that of these fully eighty per cent leave San Francisco within twenty-four hours. Formerly many discharged men squandered their money, or were robbed in San Francisco, and found themselves stranded without a cent. Under the present system occurrences of this nature are exceptional.⁶

This paternalistic approach to gradually reacclimating returning troops in the safe environs of Angel Island was intended to prevent the squandering of several years salary in San Francisco saloons, or worse, theft and injury. Army officials worried about the public disgrace of soldiers committing suicide “to hide the wreck of mind, body and property” or “becoming a charge upon the city.”⁷

Captain Finley enumerated a number of changes to convert the old Detention Camp into the Discharge Camp. Many rectangular wall tents were replaced with conical tents, deemed more comfortable because they could be heated with a “Sibley” stove in the center. The natural springs north of the camp were insufficient to meet demand, so three twenty-thousand-gallon tanks were placed on the east bluff with a pipe line to the wharf. The steamer Grace Barton made three daily trips bringing a fresh supply of water from San Francisco. Roads, walks, and the wharf at the quarry were repaired and a coal wharf built. A dumping pier was built on the eastern extremity of the quarry for disposing garbage into the bay. The extended occupancy of the site also required new latrines, bathhouses, a laundry and improved drainage and sewerage. Captain E. H. Plummer, Tenth Infantry, was charged with overseeing completion of this work. The commanding officer was Colonel Greeleaf A. Goodale of the Seventeenth Infantry, a Civil War veteran.⁸

⁵Finley, (September 1902), 293.

⁶Quoted in Finley, (September 1902), 294.

⁷Captain John P. Finley. “Discharging a Philippine Army, Part Three” *Sunset Magazine* 10:1 (November 1902): 18-19.

⁸Finley, (October 1902), 377-380. The “Sibley” stove resembled an inverted funnel placed in the center of the conical tent.

Army records indicate that in December 1901, Captain Plummer requested materials such as tongue and groove pine flooring to repair and convert the four mess halls into offices for officers and clerks engaged in preparing discharge papers. The structures were “made of rough lumber, side and floor, and the openings [were] numerous.”⁹ Plummer also requested funding to construct a small building to be used as a guardhouse and prison. This request was approved in July 1902; throughout the rest of 1902 and into 1903 the Chief Quartermaster authorized a number of small expenditures at the Discharge Camp including whitewashing, tools and supplies for minor repairs to the buildings, and equipment needed at the quarry.¹⁰

The Detention Camp and its disinfection duties were moved to a site on the north edge of the island which later became the Immigration Station. The Discharge and Detention Camps worked in concert with the Quarantine Station to quarantine, disinfect, and process troops returning from the Philippines. When a transport from the Philippines arrived in San Francisco Bay, it was inspected by a quarantine officer from the Quarantine Station before being allowed to anchor. Army transports with contagious diseases were sent to the Detention Camp. If found to be disease-free, the transport was allowed to anchor off the coast near the Discharge Camp. From here various Army officials removed passengers - active duty troops, the sick, and dead going to the Presidio, prisoners to the military prison at Alcatraz Island, and miscellaneous civilian passengers into San Francisco. A small chartered steamer then took the remaining “short-term casualties,” or soldiers to be temporarily stationed at Fort McDowell, to the Discharge Camp. These men were marched to an open space near the Administration Building where they were assigned to provisional companies and housed in tents along the appropriate company “street.” They were instructed to follow procedures for turning in their mess kits and being officially discharged and paid. Once discharged and paid they could purchase railroad ticket vouchers and money orders on site. To discourage men from going into the city the Discharge Camp included a restaurant, barber shop, post exchange, commissary, tobacco stand and fruit stand. The quartermaster was equipped to sell civilian clothing. The majority of the soldiers processed at the Discharge Camp were infantry, and then cavalry. The remaining small percentage of men were from the Artillery, Engineer, Signal, or Hospital Corps.¹¹

While awaiting discharge and preparation of all the necessary paperwork, men were expected to participate in guard, police (clean-up) or fatigue (work) duty. Fatigue duty included repairing roads and digging ditches. If they decided to reenlist they could be processed and reassigned immediately. If they decided to let their three year term expire, they were given full

⁹Letter from Tenth Infantry Quartermaster, Discharge Camp, Angel Island to Chief Quartermaster, Department of California, (1 December 1901), National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA), Record Group 92, Office of the Quartermaster General (hereafter RG 92), Entry 89, Box 3751, File No. 182354.

¹⁰See correspondence, NARA, RG 92, Entry 89, Box 3751, File No. 182354.

¹¹Finley, (November 1902), 19-25.

pay until the discharge process was complete. This was not always the case and even Finley admitted that the soldiers did not appreciate being isolated on Angel Island:

At first there was manifested a determined opposition to any form of labor, even to company police, by the short-term casuals, especially among those men whose term of three years' service had expired, and who were being held, much against their will, without pay, to complete the settlement of their accounts and to receive their discharge certificates.¹²

Payment after the end of the three year term improved the reception of enforced time at the remote Discharge Camp, but clearly many soldiers were eager to return to life without Army regulations.

In spite of the initial improvements, the Discharge Camp's facilities were still utilitarian at best. Men lived in round tents with Sibley stoves or in "Falk's combined hut and tent" groupings - three wall tents around a small wood hut with a stove. The camp barber shop was a portable frame structure held together with hinges. The most substantial structures were the frame mess halls, which still had unfinished interiors with exposed stud walls and roof trusses.¹³ Finley discussed many additional improvements needed at the Discharge Camp. First on his list was replacing the tent quarters with frame barracks and quarters for the enlisted men and officers. Finley also urged that,

Suitable quarters for the families of officers stationed at the camp ought to be provided. Married officers on duty at the camp can ill afford to maintain their families in the city, and the discomforts attending such separation are not inconsiderable. Cottages similar to those in use by the officers at the United States quarantine station, or to the quarters furnished at Fort McDowell, could be provided at the Discharge camp at moderate cost.¹⁴

Additional buildings were needed also for company and administrative offices, a guardhouse, wagon shed, and storehouse. Better coal handling facilities, a larger wharf, and magazine were desired, as well as repairs to the floors of the kitchens and mess halls. Suggested improvements to the site included better storm drainage, a wind break of fast-growing trees on the south and west, and moving the present corral to the north and the present water tanks to the northwest side

¹²Captain John P. Finley. "Discharging a Philippine Army, Part Three" *Sunset Magazine* 10:2 (December 1902): 118.

¹³For interior photographs of the Discharge Camp buildings see Finley, (November 1902), 18-19; and Finley, (December 1902), 121.

¹⁴Finley, (October 1902), 380.

of the camp.¹⁵

Depot of Recruits and Casuals

By 1904, the Discharge Camp became the Depot of Recruits and Casuals, changing the duties performed at Fort McDowell. Camp Reynolds at Angel Island and the Presidio in San Francisco had functioned as a recruit depots, providing initial training and forwarding the new soldiers to their assigned posts. The processing of recruits was now consolidated at Fort McDowell and all enlisted men returning from the Philippines or Hawaii for discharge, furlough, retirement, or transfer were sent to Angel Island for processing.¹⁶ These increased duties created an even greater strain on the temporary structures of the East Garrison. An Inspector General's report from 1904 described the recruit depot as a sub-post of Fort McDowell housing three companies - the Thirteen Infantry, a casual (temporary) detachment, and a detachment of constantly changing recruits. He noted that improvements were needed to the "crude" buildings, but first a decision to establish the depot on a permanent basis was required.¹⁷

No immediate decision was reached regarding the facilities at the East Garrison. Large numbers of men continued to pass through and by 1905 the depot had processed over 87,000 men on their way to and from the Pacific islands.¹⁸ The flow of recruits processed at Angel Island continued to increase; in December 1907 the Adjutant General's Office in Washington authorized two additional clerks and two additional cooks for the Depot of Recruits and Casuals at Fort McDowell.¹⁹ A site plan of the Depot of Recruits and Casuals from this same period shows continued use of the temporary buildings and tents and little resemblance to the permanent layout of the East Garrison. Round tents on platforms were lined up near long quarters and barracks buildings situated perpendicular to the bay coast. A few small buildings included a photograph gallery and fruit stand. Additional buildings at the top of the hill at the current location of a group of non-commissioned officers' quarters included a hospital and related

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶John Soennichsen. *Miwoks to Missiles: A History of Angel Island*. (Tiburon, CA: Angel Island Association, 2001), 151. Soennichsen gives 1907 as the date for establishment of the Recruit Depot, however other sources suggest that this change occurred gradually a few years earlier. The exact date that the Discharge Camp became a Recruit Depot is unclear. Original documents in the National Archives refer to the "Depot of Recruits and Casuals" starting in 1904 (see next footnote).

¹⁷Memorandum to Quartermaster General from Inspector General (14 May 1904), NARA, RG 92, Entry 89, Box 4414, File No. 204868.

¹⁸John A. Hussey, "Fort McDowell - Report on Application for an Historical Monument," Prepared for War Assets Administration (April 1949), typescript in Angel Island Park files, 26.

¹⁹Telegram from Adjutant General's Office, Washington, DC to Commanding Officer, Fort McDowell, Angel Island, California (21 December 1907), NARA, RG 92, Entry 89, Box 5333, File No. 226460.

support buildings.²⁰

A November 1908 sanitary report criticized the conditions at the Recruit Depot: “Buildings poorly constructed, poorly ventilated and dark and not deemed worth repairing; overcrowded, especially when there are a large number of recruits and casualties. It is believed that a good many cases of tonsillitis and similar conditions have been due to this overcrowding.”²¹ There was some discussion of two new temporary barracks buildings early in 1909, but the colonel in charge of the Depot responded with frustration about the long-term “temporary” status of his post:

If this Depot is to be continued, there seems to be but one alternative - to provide for the erection of modern buildings. If this cannot be done, the present depot should be abandoned without further temporizing. To erect more temporary barracks or other buildings of this nature on the present depot site is simply a waste of money and would do nothing but increase the unsatisfactory conditions already existing.²²

The commanding officer also railed against the demoralizing effect of bad facilities at the Depot:

The place itself creates the most unfavorable impression on the men who are sent there for enlistment, and a number of cases have arisen where men have refused to enlist because they thought that they would have to spend their time of enlistment under the same conditions as those existing there. There is also dissatisfaction among the men of the two companies constituting the regular garrison, on account of the miserable buildings in which they have to live. This dissatisfaction has manifested itself in the refusal of men to reenlist, and a number of very desirable men has [sic.] thus been lost to the companies constituting the regular garrison of the depot.²³

²⁰Site plan (blueprint), Depot of Recruits and Casuals (14 March 1905, revised January, July 1907), NARA, RG 92, Entry 89, Box 5333, File No. 226460. A site plan of the entire island listing all of the buildings was filed on June 15, 1908. See NARA, Cartographic and Architectural Branch, Record Group 77, Records of the Army Corps of Engineers (hereafter RG 77), Drawer 97, Sheet 32-4.

²¹Sanitary report, Depot of Recruits and Casuals, Angel Island (20 November 1908), NARA, RG 92, Entry 89, Box 5333, File No. 226460.

²²13th Endorsement, Depot of Recruits and Casuals, Angel Island (17 February 1909), NARA, RG 92, Entry 89, Box 5333, File No. 226460. For a complete inventory of the Depot's temporary buildings see “List of Buildings at Depot of Recruits and Casuals, Angel Island, California,” (18 February 1909), NARA, RG 92, Entry 89, Box 4947, File No. 217173.

²³Ibid.

The Depot had reached a critical point where stop-gap measures of repairing and building were no longer sufficient.

Rebuilding the East Garrison

Just a few months later the War Department decided to build a permanent Recruit Depot at the East Garrison. Regular line troops were removed from Angel Island and replaced by recruit companies transferred from other posts. This shift included deactivating the gun batteries on the island, which had been at caretaker status for several years. The first recruit company arrived on June 5, 1909. The reorganized Recruit Depot would perform the same functions as the previous temporary station, including:

...receiv[ing] recruits from the West, to provid[ing] them with a working knowledge of the customs and regulations of the Army and of the early phases of drill, and forward[ing] them to their assigned posts. In addition, all enlisted men returned from the Philippines and the Hawaiian Islands to the United States for discharge, retirement, on furlough, or under orders to report to the Adjutant General, were to be sent directly from the transports to Angel Island for processing.”²⁴

The new commanding officer was Major Thomas B. Dugan, formerly commanding the General Recruit Depot at Fort Slocum, New York.

The new administration of the Recruit Depot was accompanied by a major reconstruction campaign of permanent concrete buildings. On May 15, 1909, Dugan consulted with Lieutenant Colonel R. B. Turner, the Constructing Quartermaster at the Alcatraz Island Military Prison regarding reconstruction of the East Garrison. Turner reported on their meeting to Major General F. C. Ainsworth, the Adjutant General in Washington, D.C.:

Major Dugan was here yesterday with reference to reconstruction at Angel Island for the new general recruit depot. I think I can take charge of the job, and I have no objection to so doing. The plans for the building, which I think should be of reinforced concrete, will have to be prepared by the Quartermaster General's Office, as it will be impossible for me to prepare them here, with my present office force. Major Dugan and myself will submit in a few days a report showing our recommendations as to place where depot should be established.²⁵

²⁴Hussey, 27.

²⁵Letter Major General F. C. Ainsworth, Adjutant General, Washington, D.C. from Lieut. Col. J. B. Turner, United States Military Prison, Alcatraz Island, California, (16 May 1909), NARA, RG 92, Entry 89, Box 6407, File No. 254543.

Turner also made a number of recommendations regarding the personnel and materials for the work:

The work should be by purchase of the required material, the use of the labor of prisoners as far as possible and the hire of such foreman and mechanics as may be necessary. One hundred prisoners, or more, can be diverted to the new work at once, without interfering with construction at Alcatraz. The only civilian employe [sic.] that I have that can made use of in connection with the new work is the overseer at the stone quarry. I believe that with the present plant I can furnish all the crushed stone as fast as required, but if not, another stone crusher can easily be added to the present plant. I shall need, for the new work, a superintendent of construction and engineer, a rodman and probably one clerk; the first two as soon as the plans are ready, and the clerk according to developments. I have made inquiry in San Francisco, and can secure foremen and mechanics for the work at reasonable prices.²⁶

With Turner overseeing the work both at Alcatraz and Angel Island, the use of military prisoners for most of the labor, and the ready availability of building materials on site, the East Garrison could have modern reinforced concrete buildings for a reasonable cost.

The reconstruction of the East Garrison coincided with a growing professionalization of the duties of the Quartermaster Corps. The new Construction and Repair Division of the Quartermaster General's Office in Washington employed both military and civilian architects and engineers to meet the demand for modern structural designs as the Army expanded during the early twentieth century. The Construction and Repair Division's annual report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1909 described the new philosophy toward army post design as demonstrated by the East Garrison of Angel Island:

The policy usually followed in laying out a military post has been heretofore to allow long distances between buildings, with the result that a regimental post covers a very large area, and necessitates large expenditures for the construction of the necessary roads, walks, sewer and water systems, electric lighting, etc., and subsequently entails great expense in the care and maintenance of the grounds. This of course results in an expensive post, which really means the maintenance of a park for the use of the local public. If the appropriations were unlimited this would undoubtedly be desirable. It is not, however, believed that the appropriations for the support of the army should be spent for such a purpose, and this office believes that the army post, and particularly the Coast Artillery posts, should be more consolidated, and it is hoped to put this policy into practice at any post where new construction is contemplated. This would particularly apply to

²⁶Ibid.

the new Calvary post in the Hawaiian Islands, and also to the Recruit Depot on Angel Island, CA, plans for both of which are now being considered in this office.²⁷

Rather than an axial arrangement of free standing structures moving up the hill from the coast like the West Garrison, the new plan for the East Garrison clustered large buildings along a series of curved roads following the contour of the hillside. One massive barracks to hold 800 men was planned, as well as officer's quarters attached in rows of four or five units. The flat areas created for the Discharge Camp would remain as the parade grounds and ballfield.

The first set of building plans were prepared by July 1909, even before their siting was determined. These blueprints included the barracks building, field officers' quarters, single company officers' quarters, double company officers' quarters, and a four-set of officers' quarters. Correspondence from Quartermaster General J. H. Aleshire to Lieut. Col. Turner also mentioned the need for a large central mess hall including a central heating plant for the post. Aleshire also discussed a desire to use the "Aiken system" of reinforced concrete construction, a type of tilt-up construction that minimized the use of forms. Aleshire wrote that "the system is believed to be particularly applicable to buildings of the class required at Angel Island, and it is believed that at least one building for trial purposes should be constructed there."²⁸ This system was used at the new recruit barracks during early 1911, but probably not applied at Angel Island beyond this one trial case.²⁹

A series of topographic maps of the Recruit Depot site in the Cartographic and Architectural Branch of the National Archives illustrate the evolution of the site plan for the new buildings from August 1909 to February 1910.³⁰ The basic concept of replacing the wood structures with a reinforced concrete barracks, quarters, administration building, mess hall and hospital remains the same in the various versions of the site plan, as well as the idea of arranging the buildings north to south along the natural contours of the site. The first plan illustrating the new buildings is dated August 31, 1909. The existing wood buildings were sketched in with a note that they would all be moved or demolished. The mess hall and guard house are shown in

²⁷Annual Report of the Construction and Repair Division, (30 June 1909), NARA, RG 92, Entry 1058, Box 1.

²⁸Letter Lieut. Col. R. B. Turner, Constructing Quartermaster, Angel Island from J. H. Aleshire, Quartermaster-General, War Department, (30 July 1909), NARA, RG 92, Entry 89, Box 6407, File No. 254543.

²⁹"Fort McDowell - Aiken System," NARA, RG 92, Entry 84 - Index to General Correspondence, Box 559. More research on the Aiken System and close examination of the barracks is required to determine how this system was used.

³⁰"Angel Island, California," NARA, Cartographic and Architectural Branch, RG 92, Blueprint File, Sheets 3, 5, 6, 11, 17, 16, and 15.

their current location, but the officer's quarters were placed on the top of the hill at the current site of the NCO quarters. The administration building was shown facing the officer's quarters with its rear elevation to the parade grounds. A large barracks building occupied the space along the road between a new hospital (current location) and the officer's quarters. Several additional site plans dated December 17, 1909 shifted the location of the guardhouse, placed the administration building further up the hill, or placed half of the officer's quarters on the ridge currently occupied by the NCO Quarters and half below.

Another version of the site plan approved by the Secretary of War on February 22, 1910 shows most of the reinforced concrete buildings exactly in their current locations. However the guardhouse was in a slightly different location, the post exchange omitted, and a second, mirror image "barracks for 800 men" was drawn just west of the other one with a dashed line. A letter from Quartermaster-General Aleshire to the Adjutant General explains the intention to house upwards of 1,600 enlisted men and twenty officers with an efficient use of space:

It is contemplated to construct a depot with accommodation for a maximum of 1,600 enlisted men, with corresponding mess hall facilities, and guardhouse. Also accommodations for 20 officers. In order to concentrate the buildings as much as possible, there-by utilizing the minimum ground space and reducing the construction of roads, walks, water supply and sewers to the smallest possible amount, it is contemplated to provide for the enlisted men in two barracks of 800 men each; to place field officers in single sets of quarters and company officers in buildings to contain five officers, a captain on each end, and three lieutenants in the intermediate sets of quarters.³¹

Another site plan with a handwritten note dated June 17, 1910 shows all of the East Garrison concrete buildings in their final locations, with only one large barracks. The post exchange, which appeared on earlier plans including one dated February 9th, appears on this final plan.

Construction began on the new East Garrison buildings in 1910 and continued until 1915. Officer's quarters, the post exchange, the barracks, and administration building were all begun in 1910. An inspection report from October 12, 1910 described the progress of construction:

There are 200 prisoners now on the construction work at Angel Island, and Col. Turner stated that in about 60 days he expected to put 100 more there, so that then the work will progress more rapidly, altho' it is now progressing as rapidly as could be expected. Post Exchange is almost completed; one barrack up to the foundations and wall and first floor is in; and the field officers' set, one four-set

³¹Letter to Adjutant General from J. H. Aleshire, Quartermaster General, (7 February 1910), NARA, RG 92, Entry 89, Box 6407, 254543.

officers' quarters and the Administration Building are well under way, and on the day that I left they were about to start the second four-set of officers' quarters.³²

Three detached dwellings -- one for the commanding officer and two for field officers -- were constructed. The first two sets of four attached officers' quarters were constructed at this stage also. Funds for the post exchange at Angel Island and another at Alcatraz Island were allocated from a special Military Post Exchange fund during fiscal year 1909.³³ The Angel Island post exchange was completed in March 1911. Construction on the barracks building began in 1910 and continued until 1914. The administration building was completed in July 1911.

A report written on August 12, 1911 by Major B. F. Cheatham in the Quartermaster General's Office praised the quality of the concrete and plaster work Turner was producing with very few skilled workers. Apparently Major E. F. McGlachlin, Commanding Officer of the Recruit Depot, had complained about the slow pace of the work, but Cheatham maintained that Turner's productivity was good given the lack of skilled workers and large number of simultaneous projects. The foundations of the mess hall had just been started and it was agreed that this work should be rushed since this building would contain the central heating plant for the barracks, guardhouse, post exchange and administration building.³⁴ A new hospital was begun in 1911 as well, although it was being used as a barracks in 1913 before transfer to the Hospital Corps.

Work continued on new East Garrison structures in 1912 in spite of piecemeal funding. Another four-set of attached officers' quarters was begun. The need to complete the mess hall and centralize the large-scale operations of the Recruit Depot was especially urgent. A progress report from September 1912 indicated that the mess hall building, which included the central heating plant and storerooms for the supply department was more than one half completed. It was estimated that the work could be finished in three months with \$15,000 and the continued labor of 200 prisoners. The delay in completion of the heating plant also prevented occupation of the barracks:

Upon the completion of this building depends the occupancy of the barracks which is the one important consideration just now. The permanent party (17th and 28th Recruit Cos.) are at present quartered in rude cantonments, fast rotting away. During one month last winter there were stationed there 1200 men, 1000 of them under canvas, and at the height of the rainy season. To mess these 1200 men

³²Inspection Report, (12 October 1910), NARA, RG 92, Entry 89, Box 6756, File No. 278885.

³³Annual Report of the Construction and Repair Division, (30 June 1909).

³⁴Letter to Quartermaster-General from Major B. F. Cheatham, Quartermaster General's Office, (12 August 1911), NARA, RG 92, Entry 89, Box 7251, File No. 329789.

and the permanent party they were fed in three relays at each meal, or 9 meals a day for the garrison, permanent and casual. In the light of this experience the importance of completing the mess hall building is apparent, for which there is needed the \$15,000 and the general prisoners now employed.³⁵

This caution was in reaction to plans to take several hundred general prisoners to the mainland for road construction, reducing the labor force at Angel Island by 125 or 150 men. Currently five buildings were under construction at various stages of completion – barrack building for 800 men, complete except for heating; the guard house, seventy-one-percent complete; the hospital, seventy-four percent; mess hall building, more than fifty-percent complete; and the last four-set of officers' quarters, fifteen percent. In addition, installation of lights was fifty-five percent complete; sewer and water, twenty percent; and grading, fifteen percent.

Aside from the Aiken system experiment, the existing evidence does not explain the decision to build the new East Garrison buildings with reinforced concrete and create an uniform collection of Mission Revival structures. Certainly the decision to use reinforced concrete was influenced by Turner, who was already familiar with rock crusher equipment available at the Angel Island quarry. Stone masonry construction requires skilled labor, but concrete construction could utilize the readily available building material with unskilled labor. Reinforced concrete also was appropriate for the large-scale structures desired by Aleshire and the Quartermaster Construction and Repair Division in Washington. Concrete also easily mimicked stuccoed adobe and encouraged use of Mission Revival design. Mission Revival forms with red tile roofs became increasingly popular during this period. This new interpretation of colonial California's architecture with modern systems and structural materials also was probably considered regionally appropriate. Contemporary interest in comprehensive planning and design also influenced the siting and design of the new East Garrison buildings. The substantial and attractive new buildings would be a powerful symbol of Army investment in the Angel Island Recruit Depot.³⁶

Even as the impressive new array of concrete Mission Revival buildings were completed, perennial problems of infrastructure repairs lingered. Starting in 1910 plans were made to bring electric service from the mainland. The Army agreed to pay the approximately \$16,500 cost of Pacific Gas and Electric running a underwater cable from Marin County. Electricity was needed for modern living quarters and more critically to run the pumps needed to increase the water supply. The only alternative was installing an electric plant at the East Garrison at a cost of nearly \$30,000. Funds also were necessary to complete the walks, roads, and grading at the East

³⁵"Fort McDowell, prison labor," (24 September 1912), NARA, RG 92, Entry 84, Box 560.

³⁶For related context information see David Gebhard. "The Spanish Colonial Revival in Southern California (1895-1930)," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 26:2 (May 1967): 131-147; and R. W. Sexton. *Spanish Influence on American Architecture and Decoration*. (New York: Brentano's Inc., 1927).

Garrison, although none were allocated in fiscal year 1913.³⁷

A 1915 site plan indicates that even with the new buildings, many of the older wood buildings were still in use, particularly the row of “temporary” barracks just west of the new concrete barracks.³⁸ These wood barracks were still listed as in use, albeit in “poor” condition, in 1939. Funding limitations and the transient nature of most personnel at Angel Island seemed to allow continued use of marginal buildings. Wood buildings dating to the beginning of the Depot of Recruits and Casuals were also being used for NCO Quarters in 1915, including three of the buildings still extant today (Buildings No. 27-28, No. 25-26, and No. 32).³⁹

Fort McDowell, 1917-1941

As the United States entered into World War I, the Recruit Depot saw heavy use. Approximately 4,000 men were processed each month. After being issued uniforms and given a little training in army procedures, the new recruits went to Pacific or West coast installations. Despite the ambitious building campaign just a few years before, inadequate facilities for the large number of soldiers again required use of tent housing. The remainder of the current NCO Quarters were built during this period to augment the need for more NCO quarters as the post grew.⁴⁰ An one-story wood frame post office building was constructed next to the Post Exchange in 1918.⁴¹ In August 1919, the post designation again was changed to Recruit and Replacement Depot.⁴² The casual duties handled by the Presidio were now transferred to Angel Island.

In November 1922 the East Garrison was redesignated “Overseas Discharge and Replacement Depot, Fort McDowell” after a brief tenure as the “Recruit Section, Ninth Corps Area Training Center” (since March 1920). This name would be retained until the fort was decommissioned in 1946. Recruiting activities were largely discontinued, and the small permanent garrison at Fort McDowell provided “receiving, administration, elementary training, and disposition of troops en route to overseas stations as replacements; and the receiving, administration, and disposition of enlisted men returned from overseas stations for discharge, for

³⁷Inspection Report, (12 October 1910); Inspection Report, (4 October 1913), NARA, RG 92, Entry 84, Box 560.

³⁸Fort McDowell site plan (20 October 1915), Fortification File, NARA, Cartographic and Architectural Branch, RG 77, Drawer 97, Sheet 32-12.

³⁹See reports HABS No. CA-2721-A, CA-2721-B and CA-2721-E.

⁴⁰See reports HABS No. CA-2721-C and CA-2721-D.

⁴¹Historical Record of Buildings, NARA, RG 77, Entry 393, Box 143, Folder 4.

⁴²Hussey, 27.

reassignment, or on furlough.”⁴³ The current Finance and Signal Building (Building No. 148) was constructed at this time as the Vocational Training Building.⁴⁴ Reduction of wartime need lessened the overcrowding at the East Garrison, but it was still a busy place. In 1923 the Army started transporting troops through the Panama canal from Fort McDowell’s sister post, Fort Hamilton, New York, increasing traffic through the West Coast site. During the 1920s improvements continued to be made at the East Garrison. By this time the former Camp Reynolds, now known as the West Garrison of Fort McDowell, was maintained by a small caretaking detachment and used when the number of casualties could not be accommodated at the East Garrison. Colonel George C. Gatley became commanding officer of the post in 1924. During his five-year tenure he oversaw paving of the roads and walks, replacement of the sewers, and other repairs to the post buildings. By 1926 Angel Island was the largest troop staging facility on the West Coast.⁴⁵

Routine repairs continued in the 1930s, with the help of two Works Progress Administration (WPA) companies. These men did road work, maintenance, and planted trees. The heavily wooded conditions on the island today are in marked contrast to the openness visible in historic photographs. An inventory list of buildings at the East Garrison in June 1939 gives some indication of the variety of structures on site and the continued use of “temporary” buildings.⁴⁶

Fort McDowell, 1941-post World War II

By the late 1930s, U. S. military activity had increased in response to the European war. Clearly more facilities would be needed to accommodate the growing number of replacement troops being processed through Angel Island. To meet this demand in February 1941 the former Immigration Station became the North Garrison of Fort McDowell. Existing buildings were renovated and new barracks constructed. Additional temporary buildings were constructed at the East Garrison and the nineteenth century officer’s quarters at the West Garrison used as NCO Quarters.⁴⁷

⁴³Hussey, 28.

⁴⁴See report HABS No. CA-2721-F, Finance and Signal Building.

⁴⁵ On Gatley see Soennichsen, 155. In 1926 an one-story addition for a kitchen restaurant was added to the side of the Post Exchange. See report HABS No. CA-2721-H, Post Exchange. In 1928 a file room was added to the rear of the Administration Building. See report HABS No. CA-2721-G, Administration Building. For an East Garrison site plan from this period see “Fort McDowell, California,” (1922, October 1926), NARA, Cartographic and Architectural Branch, 92 - Blueprint File, Sheet 8.

⁴⁶Record of Equipment and Condition of Buildings, Discharge and Replacement Depot, Fort McDowell, (30 June 1939), NARA, RG 77, Entry 393, Box 142, Folder 1.

⁴⁷Hussey, 28-29.

After Pearl Harbor, the massive challenge of staging troops for overseas duty became especially urgent. Fort McDowell had the only troop staging facilities in the area and it could only accommodate 4,200 men. The remote island location which made it desirable during the Civil War complicated the transportation of soldiers to and from the post. For the first few months of the war "temporary billets were established in parks, auditoriums, and warehouses scattered over the entire Bay region."⁴⁸ By May 1942, the new Camp Stoneman in Pittsburgh, California was ready to serve as the main staging area for troops. Fort McDowell and Camp Stoneman were part of the San Francisco Port of Embarkation, a military authority that also included Fort Mason in San Francisco and Oakland Army Terminal. Although now secondary to Camp Stoneman, Fort McDowell processed a massive number of troops, mainly casual overseas replacements or troops returning from overseas for rotation or furlough.⁴⁹

During the demobilization period, Fort McDowell again played a vital role in the processing of troops. In December 1945, the busiest month, 23,632 men moved through Angel Island on their way home. The flow of returning soldiers continued in 1946, but began to lessen as the year progressed. On August 28, 1946 Fort McDowell was decommissioned and the remaining Transportation Corps soldiers transferred to Camp Stoneman. With the end of the war, the expense and inconvenience of maintaining the island post was deemed unnecessary. The War Department declared the island and its installations surplus to the War Assets Administration on September 20, 1946.⁵⁰

In 1948 the Department of the Interior assumed responsibility for Angel Island, and many proposals for establishing a park or developing the island were considered. In 1954 the Quarantine Station area of the island became a state park, but the East Garrison returned to military use with the establishment of a Nike missile base. The small garrison assigned to the Nike missile was housed in the hospital at the East Garrison. Finally in 1963 the East Garrison became part of Angel Island State Park, after the Nike base closed in 1962.⁵¹

II. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural drawings:

See notes for a listing of site plans of the East Garrison from Record Groups 92 and 77 at the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, DC and College Park, Maryland.

⁴⁸Hussey, 29.

⁴⁹On the World War II activities at Angel Island see Hussey, 28-30; and Soennichsen, 156-161.

⁵⁰Soennichsen, 161-164; Hussey, 29-30. For an inventory and appraisal from this period see "Fort McDowell - Angel Island, W-CALIF-191," NARA - Pacific Regional Office, San Bruno, California, RG 270 - Records of the War Assets Administration, Office of Real Property, Real Property Disposal Case Files, 1946-49, Box 65.

⁵¹See Soennichsen, 165-173.

A 1954 site plan is available in the Angel Island State Park collections.

B. Early Views:

A series of black and white snapshots of the Recruit Depot labeled with building numbers was found in the National Archives, Washington, D.C., RG 92, Entry 89, Box 7000, File No. 305307. These photographs are with correspondence dated March 28, 1911, but the images appear to have been taken a few years earlier since no concrete buildings are pictured.

92-CS - Panoramas of Army Camps, "Ft. McDowell Recruit Depot," c. 1911, Box 2, NARA Still Picture Branch, College Park, MD. Several of the concrete buildings, including the barracks and some of the officer's quarters, are under construction in this large panoramic photograph. The exteriors of the post exchange and administration buildings are complete.

A series of c. 1920 postcard views of the East Garrison buildings are available in the Angel Island State Park collection.

Aerial views of East and West Garrison, c. 1927, NARA, College Park, MD, RG 77, Entry 393, Box 142, Folder 2. These are very clear, oblique aeriels

C. Bibliography:

See notes for a listing of relevant archival materials from Record Groups 92 and 77 at the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, DC and College Park, Maryland.

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